

Good Evening and thank you for giving me the opportunity to share with you my passion for Adult Education

Two years ago I never would have thought I would be sitting here before you testifying about the great work being done for our Adult Learners across the State.

For the past 20 years, I have been involved in public education. A little less than two years ago I was given the chance to become involved in Bristol Adult Ed. In that time, it has changed my life. I never understood the role AE played in our community. Today, I am amazed at all we do and the life changing impact we have on the adult learners.

Our programs take people who, for whatever reason, failed to earn a high school diploma and provide them with the opportunity to achieve that goal. For ESL, we also assist new immigrants in acquiring English and becoming citizens in their new country. We offer a variety of free programs designed to meet the individual needs of our Adult Learners. Not only do we offer Diploma-based programs and English Language Programs, we have now been mandated to provide Workforce training programs structured to move the unemployed or underemployed into a position providing sustainable wages.

The Workforce Investment & Opportunity Act requires Adult Education programs to provide training, guidance and support services to our Adult Learners for up to 1 year after graduation. We are now responsible for providing an education, English Language skills development, and career training and placement to our Adult Learners. All on a shoestring budget.

In 2009, the State provided adult education programs with \$19.5 million in state and \$5.6 million in federal aid, for a total of \$25.1 million. Six years later in 2015, Adult Ed received \$20.2 million, a 3.5% increase from 6 years ago in state aid and \$4.2 million in federal aid for a total of \$24.2 million. When you compare the total dollars available via the State, that's a half million dollars less than six years earlier. And the Governor's recommended budget proposes state funding of \$19.4 million for 2017...also less than 2009.

During that same time period, Adult Education has transformed its services to meet the growing demand within our communities. We have seen an increase in students along with a complete transformation in the GED program requiring an entire technological conversion in order to accommodate these changes. We have spent hundreds of thousands of dollars retraining our teachers to implement these changes. We have developed curriculum and training to meet the guidelines of the College and Career Readiness Standards. Each teacher requires a minimum of 20 hours of training at the budgeting expense of the local Adult Ed. Program. No additional state aid has been provided but the training is mandated...all on a reduced budget.

Recent state demographics show that for every three people leaving the state, 2 immigrants are moving into the state. The majority of those immigrants do not speak English and require ESL services. I alone have opened 2 new locations in order to meet the needs of this growing population.

We have also partnered with community colleges through revisions of remedial programs under PA 12-40. Pilot programs have demonstrated that adult education programs can reduce remediation time for students seeking improved educational and occupational outcomes.

Moving forward we must:

- Maintain or increase current funding levels to support mandated programs such as College & Career Readiness Training and Workforce Investment Opportunities projects.
- Strengthen the college remediation partnerships by continuing targeted funding as was begun in 2015, and by demanding accountability from the colleges for improved levels of measurable student success.
- Increase the number credentialing programs offered by community colleges that target needed occupational areas that provide living wages. Connecticut ranks near the bottom in terms of states with citizens holding industry-approved certificates. Use of contextualized education in these certificate programs could help shorten the time that lower-skilled students would need for successful program completion.

Again thank you for this opportunity.

Respectfully Submitted,

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